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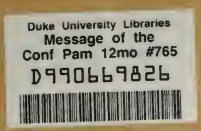

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
EXECUTIVE OFFICE,
RICHMOND, October 8, 1862.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the Confederate States of America:

The near approach of the day fixed for your adjournment induces me to renew certain recommendations made at the commencement of the session and for which legislation has not yet provided. The subject of the efficiency of the army is one of paramount importance, and the letter of the Secretary of War herewith submitted, has been elicited by correspondence with the Generals of our armies in the field, whose practical experience of the evils resulting from the defects in our present system, entitles their opinion to great weight.

An army without discipline and instruction cannot be relied on for purposes of defense; still less for operations in an enemy's country. It is in vain to add men and munitions, unless we can at the same time give to the aggregated mass the character and capacity of soldiers. The discipline and instruction required for its efficiency cannot be imparted without competent officers. No power now exists by law for securing such officers to fill vacancies when elections and promotions fail to accomplish the object.

Extreme cases ought not to furnish a rule, yet some provision should be made to meet evils, even exceptional in a matter so vitally affecting the safety of our troops. Tender consideration for worthless and incompetent officers, is but another name for cruelty towards the brave men who fall sacrifices to these defects of their leaders. It is not difficult to devise a proper mode of obviating this evil. The law authorizes the refusal to promote officers who are found incompetent to fill vacancies and the promotion of their juniors in their stead, but instances occur in which no officer remaining in a regiment is fit to be promoted to the grade of Colonel, and no officer remaining in a company is competent to command it as Captain. Legislation providing for the selection in such cases of competent officers from other regiments of the same State, affords a ready remedy for this evil as well as for the case, when officers elected are found unfit for the positions to which they may be chosen. This selection can be made in such manner as may seem to Congress most advisable; but this or some other remedy is indispensable for filling numerous vacancies now existing.

While this deficiency of competent officers exists in some cases, there is a large excess in others. Numerous regiments and companies have been so reduced by the casualties of war, by sickness and other causes, as to be comparatively useless under the present organization. There are companies in the army in which the number of officers exceeds that of privates present for duty, and regiments in which the number of such privates does not exceed that which is required for a single effective company. The cost of supporting the army, already a very heavy burden on the resources of the country, is thus increased to an extravagant extent. But this is of secondary importance compared with the inefficiency which results from this condition of things.

Some legislation which shall provide for the consolidation of companies and regiments when thus reduced in numbers, and where conscripts cannot be obtained from a State in sufficient numbers for filling the ranks, is of pressing necessity, and a deep sense of duty impels me to repeat, that no consideration for the officers, who may be unfortunately deprived of commands ought, or can safely be permitted, to obstruct this salutary reform.

It may be proper to remark that the necessity for this consolidation and the consequent discharging of tried and meritorious officers will obviously be increased by all legislative action, permitting new organizations to be formed of men, who, by the provisions of the conscript law, were directed to be incorporated into existing companies and regiments.

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
WAR DEPARTMENT,
Richmond, Va., Oct. 4, 1862.

His Excellency, JEFFERSON DAVIS,
President C. S. A.:

SIR:—I deem it my duty to call your attention, before the adjournment of Congress, to the want of power in the Executive to make appointments where neither election nor promotion secures competent officers to fill vacancies, and to consolidate companies and regiments reduced by casualties of service, below the numbers necessary for efficiency. The absence of this power is a defect in the organization of our service, so great, that it must ultimately cause disaster, if not ruin.

The present condition of the army of Northern Virginia, imperatively requires its exercise, and the experience of the Commanding General of that army, has been unable to devise any expedient by which he may avoid the alternative of violating law or of exposing his army to ruin.

The senior general of our armies whose opinion is entitled to great respect, from his familiar acquaintance with the military organizations of this continent during the last forty-five years, fully concurs with the Department as to the indispensable necessity of the proposed power.

Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
GEO. W. RANDOLPH,
Secretary of War.

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